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Mary of Bethany . .

A Message To Young Women

ELLA M. PARKS

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Mary of Bethany.

A MESSAGE TO YOUNG WOMEN.

BY

ELLA M. PARKS.

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FORE WORD.

To the young women, who, with the writer, count it their highest joy to be numbered among the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, this little booklet is sent forth; and if, through the blessing of God, it shall lead the readers to seek a more intimate acquaintance with the Master, its purpose will have been accomplished.

E. M. P.

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CHAPTER I.

The Christ Ideal.

If you could link arms with me to-day, dear sister reader, and we could walk through one of the great art galleries of Europe, we should be interested in noting how each of the old masters had his own peculiar ideal of feminine loveliness, and how this ideal predominated in his masterpieces. Here we catch a glimpse of a Titian beauty, in all the splendor of gorgeous coloring; here a Rembrandt, with dusky shadows; yonder a statuesque Madonna, with wide, dark eyes —the dream of a Raphael—while all about us are the best products of modern art, revealing, in form and feature, the individual artist's ideal of beauty and grace.

Delightful and interesting as such a study would be, I invite you to walk with me to-day in a gallery whose walls are hung with historic portraits,

faces and forms, not the dream of an artist's fancy, but which hold for us a strange fascination because they were once tremulous with feeling and glowing with life. A Master Hand has drawn these portraits for us, and, as we stroll down the aisles of this Bible gallery, faces of every type meet our eye, some glowing with radiant beauty, others somber, against a background of deepest shadow. Here, by the well-side, amid her flocks, we see the beautiful Rachel; yonder, the dark eyes of Jewish Miriam look out at us; further down the gallery we stop to admire the lovely face of the gleaner, Ruth; but our exclamations of delight die away as we stand in reverent silence before the picture of Holy Motherhood, while, as we gaze into those luminous eyes, we seem to already see, in their mysterious depths, the shadows of Calvary and an uplifted cross.

There is one portrait, from all these

about us, which has caught our eye, and to it we turn. Our sense of the beautiful draws us to it with an irresistible force, and we are held spellbound by its transcendent loveliness. We feel that a hasty study of this face will not satisfy us; we want to discover the secret of the beauty which shines out as if traced in lines of living light. If we look at the features critically, we cannot discover their charm; they are not of the classic regularity which often attends the beautiful; they might belong to any Jewish maiden; but over all there is cast a vail of holy radiance, a spiritual light which shines out of the eyes and illumines every line of the face. "Ah!" we say to ourselves, "here is something more than the beauty of an exquisite complexion or faultless features; there is character here—'the more ethereal beauty' of which poets have sung and which radiates only from the pure in heart." It is the

same beauty which we have seen resting upon the face of an aged saint, who has walked with God for a lifetime, or upon the tear-stained countenance of one from whom all of earth's treasures have been taken and who yet looks up into the face of God and says, "Thy blessed will be done!" It is the same glory that slipped out of heaven's gates and fell upon the upturned face of heavenly-minded Stephen, so that "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

But the picture has a name, and, bending eagerly forward, we read these words: "Mary of Bethany: The Christ Ideal of Young Womanhood."

"O!" you say to me, "is this really the Christ's ideal for young women? I have so often wondered just what He would have a young woman be and do. It is perplexing, in this busy age, for a Christian girl to know just

where lies her highest duty. I wonder if Mary of Bethany did really find the secret, the 'summum bonum,' of life?" In answer to your question, I point you to the words written beneath that name—words of Christ Himself, words which have lived through nineteen centuries of time—"One thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

Will you not stop with me then, for a little while, as together we study this life which won for itself that which you and I, as loving disciples of Christ, would value as the highest of honors—the Master's loving word of approval? As young women, with an earnest purpose to make our lives count the most possible for God, will it not pay us to stop and consider whether we, too, have found the secret which Mary of Bethany possessed, "the one thing needful" which shall remain when

all else shall be taken from us? Surely, it is all-important that we should make no mistake in this matter.

You have sometimes seen pictures so painted that, viewed from different directions, you behold different scenes; so this picture of Mary of Bethany resolves itself into three views, each of which is full of suggestion and singularly beautiful. And, as we study and admire this life, let us remember that the same elements of character which Christ approved on earth are those which He approves in this twentieth century, and you, my dear sister-disciple, may reproduce, in your life, the characteristics which have made the name of this simple Jewish maiden the synonym for loving devotion, wherever the gospel message has been proclaimed.

CHAPTER II.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST AND FRIEND.

"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."—John 11: 5

It is the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. All Jerusalem is in festive array, welcoming from every direction the bands of faithful Jews who are making their pilgrimage to the city of their God. Even in quiet little Bethany, two miles from the city itself, the people have built the leafy booths in which all were expected to live during the festive week in memory of the pilgrim days of Israel. In one home of Bethany there is unusual excitement. Jesus, the mighty Prophet, is coming up to the Feast, and is to be entertained in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus —that home which was ever open to Him as a restful retreat when overcome with the weariness of long journeys or pursued by the hatred of

priests and Pharisees. Here the Master somewhat relaxed from His public role, and became the confidential Friend, finding, in the devotion of these loving hearts, the comfort and sympathy denied Him elsewhere.

There is much to be done for a guest so loved and honored, and we can picture to ourselves the happiness of Mary and Martha as they go about the house, arranging everything for the Master's comfort, and living over, in anticipation, the precious days when He should be with them. But while Mary is thinking only of His presence, and of the joy with which she will receive those new unfoldings of truth which He loved to impart to His friends, Martha is wondering if enough provisions have been brought from the market and worrying lest she shall not be able to serve everything in just the proper style. So, when the Master comes, weary and heartsick from contact

with those who so utterly misunderstood Him and His mission, He finds the Bethany home in beautiful order and everything prepared for His comfort, everything except one heart that has failed to recognize the deepest need of her Master.

Poor Martha! in her anxiety to have everything at its best, she has become nervous and flurried, and has failed to prepare her mind and heart for that highest service which the Lord seeks at her hands—the simple listening to His teaching and reception of the truth; and so we see her, flying in and out, "cumbered—or literally, distracted—with much serving," seeking to prepare a great feast for the Master. She steps into the leafy booth, where the Divine Guest is seated, and there she beholds Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet, a rapt listener as He talks to her of heavenly things, a light upon her face which is but the reflected glory from the

Master's countenance, as He realizes that at last He has found a heart that understands Him and responds to His love. The scene, in its peaceful beauty, jars on Martha's overtaxed nerves, and all her irritability vents itself in a burst of impatience: "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me."

The great tender heart of the Master is touched. Looking into Martha's flushed and troubled face, He reads there physical weariness and mental anxiety, and though He appreciates the service she seeks to render Him, yet He sees her danger and mistake. Gently repeating her name, in affectionate reproof, He replies: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part."

A familiar picture it is; we have

looked at it many times, and, no doubt, have given our sympathy to poor Martha, who, it may seem to us, was rather abused. Was it right for her to serve alone, and was not the Master a little severe in His rebuke? If we have been indulging these thoughts, it has been because we have been taking only a surface view of the matter, and have failed to catch the deep spiritual lessons which we cannot but believe the Master intended we should learn from the incident. Its teachings lose none of their force as they come to us in this twentieth century, for present conditions are strangely similar to those which we see in the Bethany home, and you will recognize, in this Martha of long ago, a very familiar and prevalent type of modern discipleship. Our churches, our Epworth Leagues, our Christian Endeavor societies, are full of these sincere and yet mistaken Marthas—in fact, a

character like Mary's is something of a rarity. And though we may try to excuse Martha's action, Jesus, with infinite tenderness, rebuked her; and it is important that we heed the note of warning which He brought to her.

In the first place, we may be sure that the Master did not question the motive that actuated Martha in her service, but He tried to show her that she was mistaken in her ideas of what constituted the true spirit of service. She was wrong in thinking that true devotion consisted only in "much serving," rather than in an attitude of the soul. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful."

"Cumbered with much serving," "careful and troubled"—is not this an accurate likeness of many a modern Martha? Not only does this apply to the home and social life, where the spirit of anxious care has so taken

hold of many hearts, but, even in our religious lives, this spirit has crept in. We have heard the subject of service so emphasized of late years, and our churches, with their manifold departments and sub-departments, their committees and ecclesiastical machinery, have so absorbed the time and attention and thought of our Christian young women that the subjective side of their religious life has been too often sadly neglected. Like Martha of old, they are trying to satisfy their own natures and fulfil their ideas of Christian duty by "much serving" instead of quiet tarrying at Jesus' feet.

Every one who would make a success in the business world of to-day must live the "strenuous life," and so we see our brothers waging the battles of competition and sacrificing health, domestic enjoyment, and, too often, religious duty, upon the altar of business life. This same spirit of

rush and bustle has pervaded the lives of American women, and as a consequence, there are numberless victims to nervous prostration every year, while one has only to study the faces of the women, young and old, whom one meets on the streets in an hour's time, to realize how very few are evidently letting "the peace of God rule in their hearts." There is so much to do at home, so many clubs to attend, so many social calls to be made, so much work to be done for the church in order to keep up its finances—so much of everything except time for personal devotion and communion with God. This is why many a dear girl finds herself an active "worker" in the young people's societies, Sunday School and missionary auxiliaries, who still carries about a hungry heart, unsatisfied because unfilled with the Spirit of Christ. If one is seeking the reason for so many Christian young women

drifting back into a worldly life, it may be traced to the fact that they are not finding food for the heart-life in daily communion with Christ.

Like Martha of Bethany, we have allowed the worldly standards about us to so influence our ideals of service that we are in danger of losing the sweet simplicity of the Christ ideals. It was the custom in Jerusalem to honor a guest with a feast, and Martha was so anxious to keep up with the style of the day, that she did not stop to inquire "What would the Master like best?" Can we not see something similar to this spirit in the almost feverish anxiety with which the church seeks to keep up with the world in the attractions of its social life? Do you remember that last charity fair you worked for and that supper where you served, coming home with aching head and feet, too tired to pray or glance into your Bible? We think that the cause of

Christ must be advertized and advanced along worldly lines and external activities, forgetting that it is "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Is it not possible that if we would pause long enough to-day to hear the Saviour's voice, that He might suggest some changes in some of our forms of service? The Christ calls ever to simplicity in our church, our home, our social life; but we have added so many externals to our ideals of what is needful that we sometimes wonder if He really meant what He said when He uttered those memorable words: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Let no one think that we would underestimate the value of Christian work or the usefulness of various means adopted in our churches for the upbuilding of the kingdom. The heart most full of love to God will be most full of love to man—a love

which will find its expression in some form of service. We would not urge upon any Christian young woman the mysticism and sentimentality that would lead her to seek the seclusion of a convent; but we do plead for a deepening of the devotional life—an emphasizing of personal and intimate acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you say, "There is so much to do that must be done, and if we all sat down like Mary, what would become of the cause?" It is indeed true that the work of the church rightly demands a portion of our time and effort, but any mere external activity which deprives us of our time for the devotional study of God's word and the prayer life, where, with the world shut out, we may meet our Lord, face to face—anything, in our home, social or religious life that robs us of this privilege and duty is dangerous to our spiritual life. A

simple meal would have served the purpose just as well as the elaborate feast Martha was planning, and the former would have left her with heart and mind free from anxiety and responsive to the Master's words. Jesus wanted Martha—not her feast. He was hungry for sympathy and heart-food.

Dear sister of mine, I wonder how many times Christ comes to us and would draw us into the secret place of fellowship with Himself, but finds us too busy, "with much serving," to respond to His invitation? Shall we not to-day hear His loving word of reproof, and, leaving all, take our place, with Mary, at His feet, there learning "the one thing needful"—that "good part," which shall remain when working days are over?

CHAPTER III.

AT JESUS' FEET.

"Mary also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word."

"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence."—Psalm 31: 20.

Artists and poets have never tired of idealizing the graphic story of Mary at the feet of her Lord, and, indeed, one cannot find, in all the earthly life of Jesus, a scene more beautiful or suggestive. As is so often the case, the vivid contrasts in this picture make it all the more striking, and Mary's individuality stands out in bright relief against the background of Martha's bustling figure.

Mary, also, was anxious to serve her Master, but she had caught the true spirit of the gospel better than had Martha. Her intercourse with Jesus had taught her that the highest devotion that could be rendered, and

the service which He most appreciated, was the loving worship of a human heart, and so, with the perfect abandon of a nature fully surrendered to the will of her Lord, she takes her place as an eager learner at the feet of the Great Teacher.

We are not told what the Master's words were to that sensitive, responsive heart, but we feel sure that He told her many of the deepest secrets of His love and let her enter into some knowledge of the gray shadows that already lay athwart His pathway. And now, upon this sweet and holy fellowship, there falls the harsh note of Martha's censure, like a jarring discord in a bar of music. She could not understand how such an attitude of devotion and quiet listening could be pleasing to the Master—she would do some service which would demonstrate to Him and to those about that she was thoughtful of His needs. Alas, for poor Martha! she

did not realize what her feast was costing her in the way of fellowship with her Lord and a knowledge of His will!

"Mary hath chosen that good part." Choice involves an act of the will. It was not merely the natural temperament of the younger sister that led her to the place of communion. Mary had made a deliberate choice—as you and I must do. She had chosen wisely and well—"the good part"—a personal, intimate knowledge of Jesus and of His will. Paul said, "I count all things but loss . . . that I may know Him." This knowledge comes not through "much serving," but through much loving. There must be a "choosing," a "counting," and then a tarrying.

It is an old legend of the Middle Ages which tells us that certain monks who gave themselves up to ceaseless adoration of the pictures of the crucified Christ, came to have re-

produced, in their own bodies, the marks of His passion—the nail-prints in hands and feet and thorn wounds on the brow. Fantastic as the thought may be, it still holds a suggestive truth. We cannot but believe that as Mary of Bethany lingered at the feet of her loved Master, and as she opened her heart to the full radiance of His truth, she took on something of the Lord's own glory, and those who saw her might have taken knowledge that she had been with Jesus.

This law of growth in the spiritual life is still in force to-day. It is only by "beholding" that we are "changed into the same image." With all our twentieth century helps to culture and religious thought, with our libraries and reading courses along lines of Christian scholarship, with our multiplied religious services—still there is nothing that can take the place, as a

means of spiritual growth, of the daily, studious, devotional reading of God's word and secret prayer. Would you know the secret of the leanness you feel in your own soul, and which is so apparent in many Christians about you? Believe me, much of it may be traced to the neglect of these two means of grace. You have been trying to serve, Martha-like, without first finding the strength needed by waiting at Jesus' feet. So busy with the cares of this world, so engrossed in tasks of every-day life, so pressed by social engagements, you have seemed to be able to find no time for communion with the Lord of heaven. The word of life, which might have been a source of daily strength to you, has somehow lost its attraction; prayer has become a duty instead of a blessed privilege, and you wonder why it is that the presence of Christ seems so unreal, and His service so many times a bur-

den. And while you have been struggling on, wondering if, after all, this is all the Christian life means, the dear Lord has been longing to take you into the inner circle of His love, and make your life rich and glad and abundant because filled with a sense of His indwelling presence.

Robertson has said, "Only in the sacredness of inward silence does the soul truly meet the secret-hiding God. The strength of resolve, which afterwards shapes life and mixes itself with action, is the fruit of those sacred, solitary moments when we meet God alone." And still another has said, "We may lay it down as an elemental principle of religion that no large growth in holiness was ever gained by one who did not take time to be often and long alone with God."

But you say, "I am so busy every day; I have my work in the office, at the teacher's desk, or behind the

counter; how am I to find time for this deep devotional life?"

To you, my dear sisters, who must fight your own battles in this busy work-a-day world, I bring a message which has been a great source of comfort to my own heart. It came from the lips of one of the greatest teachers of spiritual things in this country, and contains a truth both inspiring and comforting. He said: "The highest worship which we can offer to God is the simple recognition of His presence."

You will see, in an instant, how simple this makes the question of the devotional life for the busy young woman. True it is, you may not be able to spend the time in secret prayer and study of the word that your more favored sister in the home may do, but you may be hid, moment by moment, "in the secret of His presence" by simply learning to recognize the ever-

present Lord by your side. You remember that Tennyson has sung:

"Speak to Him, thou, for he hears,
and Spirit with spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing and
nearer than hands and feet."

The command, "Pray without ceasing," was, for many years, a great enigma to me. But since I have learned the true meaning of the passage, it has seemed just as beautifully natural as are all the rest of our Father's commands. While it is not possible for us to be constantly in the bodily attitude of prayer, yet the devout soul may be constantly in the spirit of prayer, so that, when temptation comes, there will be the instant, upward look to Him "who is able to keep us from falling," and when an unexpected pleasure lights our pathway it will seem like second nature to send up a silent word of gratitude and praise to Him who is the Giver of every good and every perfect gift.

You will be amazed to find the richness and blessing that will come into your life as you acquire this blessed habit of "practicing the presence of God." Prayer will become what God meant it should be—the natural outgoing of your whole nature to Him, and you will know the sweetness of communion with your Lord "as friend with friend." There will be nothing stale or uninteresting about your Christian experience, but you will find in this soul-romance, this love-life, an increasing measure of joy as you walk and talk with Him who is the Lover of your soul.

A beautiful incident is told of one of the theological professors in a great German university. He was noted for his great personal piety, and some of his students, in discussing the matter, decided that he must spend a great many hours daily in prayer. Finally, one of the students volunteered to secrete himself in the professor's study

and try to find out how many hours he spent upon his knees. Accordingly he hid behind a screen where he could watch the professor, who was busy writing a volume on theology. All the morning he watched, but no visible signs of prayer. Just as the bell struck the hour of noon the professor slowly rose, took off his skull cap, and lifting his eyes to heaven, said simply: "Dear Lord, our mutual understanding still continues!" took up his pen and began work again.

No life is too busy to worship in this precious and intimate way. As you sit at your teacher's desk in the school room you may be conscious that the Great Teacher is standing at your side, ready to impart to you the needed lessons of heavenly grace, or at your office desk you may beat out on your typewriter a song of praise as you behold Him who is invisible.

But while we may keep in the constant spirit of prayer at our work, yet

there is an imperative need of quiet times when we can shut out the world and be alone with God. The saints of all ages have realized this fact, and those whom we now revere as holy men and women of God spent much of their time in the closet of secret prayer. Need I remind you of that marvelous woman, Susannah Wesley, who, with a family of nineteen children, yet found time for hours of secret prayer and meditation every day; or of General Gordon, whose white handkerchief, outside his tent door, gave notice to all that he was holding audience with the King of Heaven? Need I remind you of Him who, worn with grief and often ready to drop from fatigue at the close of the day, yet made His way alone to the mountain side where, through all the long hours of the night, He poured out His soul before His Father?

It is very sweet to close the day with the word in our minds and

hearts, and our Saviour's name upon our lips in prayer; but very often, especially with our business sisters, the night brings with it so much of physical weariness and mental exhaustion that it is impossible to fully appreciate the lessons which the word brings to us in this hour, or to put our desires clearly before the Lord. For this reason I urge upon every reader of these words the observance of the Morning Watch. This movement has become so widespread among our colleges and young people's societies that it needs little explanation, but to those who may not know of it we will simply say it is the setting apart of the first few minutes or half hour of the day to the reading of God's word, prayer and quiet thought. You will remember that He who spent long nights in prayer upon the mountain side has also left us an example in keeping the morning watch, for Mark tells us that "in the morning, rising

up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed."

Beginning the day at the feet of Jesus! Looking into His face before we look into the faces of our fellow men! Hearing His words before earthly voices are in our ears! Catching His message to bear to other hearts! Feeling His touch upon heart and brow and lips, sealing us His own in the freshness of the morning!

Dear reader, if you are not keeping the Morning Watch, what can I say that will induce you to begin it this very day? My own personal experience here might be a witness to the blessing which such a habit brings into the life. It was not until the last term of my college life that this subject was brought forcibly to my attention. My hour for Bible study and prayer had not been regular up to this time, but I began the experiment and I was amazed to find what a difference

it made in my life. Perhaps there was a little element of sacrifice which entered in and increased the blessing, for that delightful half-hour nap had to be sacrificed and sometimes extra lessons called imperatively for those precious moments. But how the word opened up to my mind as I came to it with the vigor of rested body and brain; how the Master spoke in the quiet of that morning hour, and how its influence, like a holy benediction, lingered through all the busy hours of the day!

Henry Drummond, author of "The Greatest Thing in the World," has said: "Five minutes spent in the companionship of Christ every morning—ay, two minutes, if it is face to face and heart to heart—will change the whole day, and make every thought and feeling different." Let us begin the day, then, "in the secret of His presence," trusting Him to keep, through trials and temptations,

" that which we have committed unto Him."

It may seem, to some of my readers, that I am putting an undue amount of emphasis on the subjective side of the Christian life, leaving untouched the great question of service. This is simply, as intimated previously, because the subject of service has been kept so persistently before our young people of late years. We can scarcely go into a religious meeting nowadays without hearing urged upon the people " consecration for service." This is all good as far as it goes, but there is one thing better—that is, " consecration to God." Set apart for Himself—not to any particular service nor necessarily to any outward activity; set apart, it may be, to suffer His will—to stand and wait as well as to run His errands. Is it not true, dear friends, that many of us are willing to be consecrated to service who are not willing to consecrate our-

selves wholly to the Lord, ready to make His will our will in every detail of our lives?

This was the difference between the service of Mary and that of Martha. Mary's will was fully surrendered to the will of Jesus, and when she saw that He wanted a quiet listener rather than a busy servant she hastened to render Him this service. But Martha hurried on in her self-appointed tasks, forgetting her high privilege in the presence of Him who declared: "Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends."

"Set apart for Jesus!
Is not this enough,
Though the desert prospect
Open wild and rough?
Set apart for His delight,
Chosen for His holy pleasure,
Sealed to be His special treasure
Could we choose a nobler joy—and would we if we might?

AT JESUS' FEET

"Set apart to love Him,
And His love to know,
Not to waste affection
On a passing show;
Called to give Him life and heart,
Called to pour the hidden treasure
That none other claims to measure,
Into His beloved hand! thrice blessed,
'set apart!'

"Set apart forever
For Himself alone!"
"Now we see our calling
Gloriously shown;
Owning, with no secret dread,
This our holy separation,
Now the crown of consecration
Of the Lord our God shall rest upon
our willing head."

But can anyone doubt but that she, who lingered at the Master's feet, would be quick to obey His call to service? When He should say, "Whom shall we send and who will go for us?" it would be Mary who

would spring quickly up with the glad response, "Here am I; send me!" The same spiritual intuition which led her to tarry would now impel to action. So we see that, after all, the devotional life and Christian service are related as cause to effect, and the heart that keeps closest to the Lord in loving communion will be the one most likely to be used by Him in service to others.

One of the most beautiful promises which we have of Divine guidance is the one in which the Lord declares, "I will guide thee with mine eye." We may not hope to prove the sweetness of this promise unless we take our place, with Mary, at His feet, where His eye may be upon us and ours upon Him. Such delicate guidance comes only to those who have counted all things but loss that they might know Him, and have come into such blessed and intimate fellowship

that the glance of His eye is sufficient to reveal duty.

How changed would much of our service become if we were thus doing God's work, in His way! How some forms of service, to which we have been attaching great importance, would dwindle and others suddenly spring into importance! The fact is, that in our anxiety to see our young people's societies prosper along numerical lines, our missionary collections up to the mark, our social and literary meetings a success, we are in danger of overlooking the fact that these are merely means to an end—that end, the salvation and sanctification of souls. Because we lose sight of this fact, our service in these departments becomes, too often, purely mechanical—we work in them because we are interested in them, just as we are interested in a literary club, or charitable organization. We lose sight of the spiritual element, and so

it comes about that you can find ten young women to work for a social or literary program, where you can find one who will go and speak to a lost soul about Christ. "I am willing to help in the church, but don't ask me to do any personal work!" is a remark often heard, and so these dear young women hope somehow to fulfill their duty to God and the lost world about them by these "creaturely activities," leaving on other shoulders the burden of prayer and personal endeavor for the salvation of others. Dear reader, you have been saved in order that you might save others. Let us remember that there is no service that ranks in importance with the personal winning of souls.

In this rush of conflicting interests in home, social, and religious life, the young woman who would thus serve and count as an active force in the deepest spiritual life of the church, must choose, as Mary did—must

count some things as loss. We sing, with great gusto, "Take time to be holy!" but are we really willing to take time? Are we willing to cut some things out of our lives—things not necessarily wrong in themselves, but which take our time—in order that we may have the greater opportunity to commune with God and work for souls? It may mean less "serving" in some particulars of our social and religious lives; it may mean the giving up of reading all the latest historical novels, in order to be "up-to-date," and devoting that time to the study of God's Word; it may mean fewer hours spent upon embroidery and artistic sofa pillows and more upon gratifying the inner life; it may mean, dear college girl, that the half-hour in the morning, which spent on your Greek last term gave you such splendid credits, will now be dedicated to the morning watch, when Christ shall whisper to you His words

of life; it may mean that the worldly crowd of young people, who believe in "being sensible, and not going to extremes in religion," will decide that you are "a nice girl, but rather peculiar, you know." Do not hope to escape the criticism of some Martha, who misunderstands you, but rejoice that there is One who recognizes that you have chosen "that good part."

I think I hear some young woman say, "Yes, I want to enter into this life of communion with Christ, but how can I sit at His feet as Mary did? He seems so far away in heaven! If He were only here on earth, as He was in the Bethany home, then how gladly I would leave all to seek His presence." You have forgotten the Master's own words when He said, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away." Only now and then would the Bethany home be blessed by the Lord's presence, only rarely could Mary lin-

ger to commune, face to face with her Master. Jesus realized the limitations upon the earthly life, and, so, while His friends were mourning that He was going away from them, He tried to impress them that His departure only meant a fuller manifestation of Himself to their hearts. "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever."

That little word, "another," has a very special meaning in this connection. We have no word in the English language to express just what is meant in the original Greek. In that language there are two words, both translated by our word "another," but one meaning "another of a different kind;" the second, "another of the same kind." It is "another" used in this last sense which Jesus used when He promised "another Comforter." "The promise of the Father" was not to be a Being unlike the

Saviour, with different attributes, but He was to be identically like the Lord Jesus, with the same love and interest in the welfare of the disciples. It was as if the Master had said, "Yes, I must leave you. For three years I have been all things to you; I have supplied every need of your nature. Every problem you have met, I have helped you to solve; in every hour of trouble I have been near to comfort. But now that I must depart, I will not leave you comfortless; I will pray the Father and He will send you another Comforter, just like Myself, and, as I have been all things to you, so He also will supply your every need. You may bring your problems to Him as you have to Me; you may prove Him a Comforter, indeed, in every dark hour, for He shall testify of Me. He shall glorify Me in your hearts."

There is a quaint and beautiful custom in connection with marriage fes-

tivities in the Orient. When, in the evening, the procession passes from the bridegroom's home to that of the bride, the nearest friend of the bridegroom lights a torch and bears it at the head of the procession, before the bridegroom, so holding it that the light falls not on his own figure, but lights up the bridegroom's face.

Like unto this is the ministry of the blessed Holy Spirit. He is only waiting for your invitation and the surrender of your will, to come into your heart, cleansing it from defilement, and making it an holy temple for the Heavenly Bridegroom's indwelling. With the torch of His divine illumination, He will light up the face of your crucified and risen Saviour, making Him as real to your spiritual vision as was His earthly presence to Mary of Bethany. You

may as truly sit at His feet as did this disciple of old, for He is still the Matchless Teacher, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." And thus beholding, you shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord!"

"Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
O what words I hear Him say!
Happy place! so dear, so precious!
May it find me there each day.
Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
I would look upon the past,
For His love has been so gracious
It has won my heart at last.

"Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
Where can mortal be more blest?
There I lay my sins and sorrows,
And when weary find sweet rest.
Sitting at the feet of Jesus,
There I love to weep and pray,
While I from His fulness gather
Grace and comfort every day.

AT JESUS' FEET

"Bless me O my Saviour, bless me,
As I sit low at Thy feet,
Oh, look down in love upon me,
Let me see Thy face so sweet.
Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus,
Make me holy as He is;
May I prove I've been with Jesus,
Who is all my righteousness."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Again we are in quiet little Bethany, in the home that Jesus loved, but how changed are all the surroundings! No busy preparations for a coming guest, no building of festive booths, no plans for a feast, but over all the pall of sorrow's silence. Within the home Martha and Mary sit, bowed in an agony of grief. Scarcely yet can they realize that He who has protected and cared for them in tenderest affection, is lying, cold and still, in yonder tomb. It all seems like a horrid dream, from which they will soon awake to find Lazarus still with them.

"If the Master had only been here!" wails Martha. "He loved Lazarus so, and He would not have seen him suffer. O! why did He not come?" And the stricken heart of

Mary echoes the question, "Why did He not come?" How she had longed for the sympathy of His hand-clasp, the solace of His loving voice! How together they had hoped and watched for His coming, hour after hour! They cannot understand, but still they cling to their faith in Him whom they have learned to love as Friend and Master.

But now a messenger enters and whispers a hurried word in Martha's ear. Forgetting every one else, even her weeping sister, she hastens from the house, hurrying to meet the Master, whom she sees approaching. As He greets her, all the longing of her heart bursts out in a sob, "Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" And then the Master speaks to her such words of divine hope that Martha's faith takes wing and mounts higher and higher until it rests on that pinnacle of confession: "Yea, Lord, I believe that

Thou art the Christ, the Son of God!"

But Jesus, who never forgets His own, turns to Martha and asks, "Where is Mary?" Ah, yes, He, the Reader of hearts, knew all the longing of those days, the fearful uncertainty that had burdened Mary's heart, and the questionings of her faith which yet held anchor in His love and omnipotence. And so He waits without, while Martha, with joyful steps, runs to call her sister.

"Listen, Mary!" she exclaims, "the Master is come and calleth for thee!"

With heart beating fast, Mary hastily rises and hurries down the path where the Master is waiting. As she draws near, a memory, perhaps, of that last visit, when Lazarus was one of the happy household, overwhelms her, and, as she lifts her tear-stained face and meets the sympathetic glance of her Lord, His own eyes full of tears,

she casts herself at His feet, unconsciously repeating the same pathetic words which Martha had used, words which had been often upon their lips during those weary days of waiting and watching, "Lord! if Thou hadst been here!"

But why need we further picture this scene, so familiar to us all—the weeping Master, the sealed tomb, the word of power, the risen Lazarus? The veil drops over what succeeded, the happy reunion of sisters and brother, the fellowship with Him who had indeed proven Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life. But to all time the comforting lessons, which this picture presents have remained as a benediction and solace to sorrowing hearts everywhere.

The fact that Mary of Bethany was a loving, devoted disciple of Jesus did not protect her from the natural sorrows of life any more than it will protect you or me. Into the lives of

many of God's dearest saints have crept sorrows well-night heart-breaking. Few of the readers of these words but have, in some way, passed through the deep waters, and have stood, with Mary of Bethany, in the shadows of some great affliction. It may have been at the tomb of some loved one, who was dearer than life; it may have been at the open grave of heart hopes and cherished plans. There are sorrows for which we do not wear bands of crape—burial services where we lay away forever the dreams of what might have been, with none to understand or sympathize save Him who is "the God of all comfort."

In the loneliness of such an hour our hearts have cried out, "Why must this be? Why must this loved one be given up? Why must this hope of my heart be sacrificed?" Perhaps the Master's presence has seemed dimmed through our blinding tear drops, and

we have thought that He has forgotten us. To any heart thus burdened to-day, I bring a message of cheer and hope. "The Master is come and calleth for thee!" He waits to sympathize and comfort. He is calling you unto Himself that He may apply to your broken heart the balm which no earthly love can supply. Think you that He who wept with Mary of Bethany fails to share your sorrow? He understands the pang with which you said good-bye to that "career" you had dreamed for yourself, and took up again the round of petty cares; He knows how your faith almost staggered under the weight of that physical affliction so mysteriously sent upon you; He knows every heartache and every unfulfilled desire "In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them."

Did you notice that when Mary ran to meet the Saviour, she instinctively

sought to find comfort where she had found blessing in the past—at His feet? The same divine Love which had shed its beams of light upon her trusting heart in other days, was now to light up her path of sorrow. Christ the Teacher is Christ the Consoler, and in the presence of Him whom her soul loved, faith revived and heavenly peace settled down upon her troubled spirit. And so it is ever with the Master's own. No comfort, no support, no sympathy like that which He gives! No shelter from life's sorrows like the everlasting Arms! No place of peace and rest save at the feet of Jesus! Happy the heart who knows by experience the way into this Holy of Holies!

Jesus said Lazarus's death should be the means of showing forth the glory of God. The loved and lost was to be restored to Love's embrace again, and out of an empty tomb the light of heaven was to shine. Dear,

sorrowing heart, there waits a resurrection morning's joy for you, and across the empty tomb of your sorrow you shall yet behold, written in letters of living light, "This light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding weight of glory!"

"There's never a day so dreary
But God can make it bright,
And unto the heart that trusts Him
He giveth songs in the night;
There's never a heart so broken
But the loving Lord can heal;
For the heart that was pierced on
Calvary
Doth still for His loved ones feel.

"There's never a cross so heavy
But the nail-scarred hands are there,
Outstretched, in tender compassion,
The burden to help us bear;
There's never a sin nor sorrow,
There's never a pain nor loss,
But that we may bring to Jesus,
And leave at the foot of the cross."

CHAPTER V.

AN ALABASTER BOX OF OINTMENT.

"Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thoughts her mind admits,
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there."
—Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

"She hath done what she could."—Mark 14: 8.

Only six days and then the Passover—and the Cross! Hounded by priests and Pharisees; hated by a disappointed populace; bereft of those, even among His disciples, who could enter into the fellowship of His coming sufferings—alone, terribly alone, the Son of man turned His steps steadily toward Jerusalem. But ere He should enter the Holy City, which was already excitedly asking, "What think ye, that He will not come to the feast?" the future sufferer turned aside for one last season of communion with the loved ones in Bethany. It was as if, in the loving

companionship of these devoted hearts, He would seek the strength to gird more fully His soul for its last awful struggle. But, while about His pathway the shadows were gathering with fearful rapidity, in the home of Martha all was joy and gladness. Had not Lazarus been given back to them, snatched from the very embrace of death? And now the Master had come, and they would do Him honor. Another feast is prepared, and close by the Master's side reclines Lazarus, while, true to her nature, Martha is serving. How should they know that in a few short days they would see their divine Friend bearing His cross up the Via Dolorosa? And so all is happiness and rejoicing, and the approaching gloom falls only on Him who was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. None among His disciples to share His loneliness; on every side faces are bright with the joy of the

present moment. No one, do we say? Yes, there is one heart whose love has made strangely sensitive to spiritual influences. By that subtle sympathy that exists between kindred spirits, the soul of Mary feels something of the mysterious sorrow that is settling down upon the spirit of her Lord, and her affectionate nature responds to His silent cry for sympathy with all the ardor of a measureless love. Stealing softly out from the happy company, her heart longing to show the Saviour, not only her grateful love, but that she enters, in some measure, into His sorrow, she returns bearing her most precious worldly possession, an alabaster box of ointment, very costly, and slipping up softly to where the Master is reclining, she breaks the fragile casket and anoints His head and feet. Then, as if not yet satisfied with this manifestation of devotion, she bends and wipes those loved feet with the hairs of her

head, while the fragrance of the precious perfume floats out into the room and fills the house.

It would seem that no one could deny the fitness of such a tribute of love, but, alas! Mary is once more doomed to be misunderstood. The same spirit which prompted Martha's impatient speech, now is heard in the disapproving murmurs of disciples and bystanders. "To what purpose is this waste?" snarls out the traitor. "This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor!"

But, hark! Again the Master speaks in loving appreciation of Mary's service. "Let her alone; she hath done a good work. Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Oh, happy Mary! misunderstood by

loved ones and disciples, but so fully understood by thy Lord! Thy love hath made thee immortal! He who so loved that He gave His life a ransom for many, counts no sacrifice, however extravagant, as useless if done for love of Him. True affection puts no price upon its gifts, but pours out its treasures with a prodigal hand. Love gives all.

But still the murmur of critical disciples is heard about us to-day. The hard-headed, so-called "practical" people, who do not believe in going to extremes in religion, either in financial sacrifice or that of service, are still murmuring at this waste of ointment. Any spontaneous outburst of devotion is characterized as a species of fanaticism, and energy expended in any other form of service than that designated by them as "practical" is discounted as being useless extravagance. Giving just for love's sweet

sake is an experience of which they know nothing.

"Three hundred pence! What is the use of wasting your splendid talents in the slums, among people who never will appreciate your work for Him? A waste of ointment!"

A bright young woman, the only child of an aged Christian minister, offered herself for missionary work in China. Only a month after reaching her field of labor, before she had even begun to learn the language, she fell a victim to a terrible fever, and found her grave, far away from home and friends, in that heathen land. When the sorrowing father was asked if he did not rebel against such a providence, he replied, "I've nothing too precious for Jesus!"

"What a useless sacrifice!" everyone exclaimed, when they read of her death. But He who valued Mary's anointing counted not her ministry a failure. And still, above the echo of

the Judas-spirit, we hear the Master's clear tones of love, "It shall be told for a memorial of her!"

And here, dear reader, we bid farewell to Mary of Bethany, as she stands with the Master's smile of approval resting like a benediction upon her, while down the long vistas of the ages there still floats the odor of costly ointment—the fragrance of a love that gives all!

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